1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

This discrepancy is partly explained by the fact that girls marry at an earlier age than boys, and also by the fact that polygamy, especially the large-scale polygamy in Bida town, implies marriage of young girls to much older men. Married girls being counted in this table as 'adults', these factors must upset the 'normal' sex ratio in the higher age groups of non-adults. But this explanation only underlines the general social problem emerging from these figures: how are we to interpret the divergence between the sex ratio among adults (implied in polygamous marriage), and the sex ratio among non-adults? In other words, how can the sex ratio in actual polygamous marriage be harmonized with the sex ratio on which such marriage potentially depends? There is, first, the heavier mortality among men, whose numbers, only a generation ago, were constantly reduced in the almost permanent wars in Nupe. But the comparison between the figures referring to Bida town and to the rural districts in the Emirate respectively reveals that there is also another influence at work. In Bida town the difference between the two sex ratios is 0·7, in the rural districts the figures are identical. That means that marriage in the villages—monogamous marriage, or polygamous marriage on a small scale—can rely on local women, whereas Bida must import its wives from outside. Formerly slave girls constituted a large contingent of this urban importation of wives-to-be; today, in smaller proportion, girls from the country drift into Bida. We shall see later that genealogies and marriage statistics fully endorse this explanation.

Population and Emigration

Translated into terms of general population movement, the strikingly low birth- and fertility-rate among the Nupe can mean only one thing: a decreasing, or at least a stationary, population. The general population statistics in the Census can, on the whole, be taken to confirm this conclusion. But the nature of the available statistics does not allow more than this indication of a general trend. The total population of the Nupe tribe was given as 349,008 in the Census of 1921;[1] ten years later the figure is 326,017. These figures, implying a fall of over 20,000 in ten years, cannot be accepted as anything but a very crude approach to the true situation.

The difficulties which stand in the way of exact population statistics in a West African territory need not be stressed specially. Yet the earlier Census figures were likely to have underrated rather than overrated the population; with the improved technique of registration (e.g. for taxation) in the last ten to fifteen years one would have expected an increase rather than a decrease in the numbers that appear in the Census, even if the population had remained stationary or had decreased slightly. Certain other sources of error, however, seem not to have been eliminated, above all, inconsistencies in tribal classification. The native and British officials who compile the Census lists are frequently insufficiently acquainted with tribal and sub-tribal names and distinctions.[2] Thus,

[1] See C. K. Meek, *The Northern Tribes of Nigeria*, Oxford, 1925, vol. ii.

[2] It may therefore well be that the 1921 Census which was compiled under the

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

562 554 563 interests, deep-seated class sentiments, which cannot admit of a lowering of status in any one high-born.[1] Yet if, owing to the rigid class system, marriage between the classes is thus turned into a potential instrument of social advancement, its utilization in this sense is also rigidly controlled.

582 565 For marriage in the aristocracy, especially in the royal nobility, is to a very large extent endogamous—'family marriage' as the Nupe call it. As the Nupe-Fulani regard themselves all as related, and as most families of the nobility are more or less closely related by marriage, practically all 'family marriages' of this kind are at the same time marriages within the ruling class. The Fulani in Nupe, moreover, following Mohammedan practice, encourage parallel cousin marriage (which is forbidden by the traditional marriage rules of the country) as well as cross-cousin marriage, and thus widen enormously the scope of 'family marriages', especially between descendants in the male line. Family marriage in Nupe, finally, is characterized by a much lower bride-price than that paid in ordinary exogamous marriage. This leads to the rather paradoxical situation, on which my informants invariably commented, that the wealthiest and proudest classes of the country favour 'cheap' marriage, while the humble commoners and peasants are committed mostly to a very high bride-price. The explanation is that the low bride-price in this case supplies an additional incentive for endogamous marriage—'class endogamous' marriage, as it were—and thus for the preservation of the social identity of the ruling classes (as well as, incidentally, a strengthening of their group solidarity).[1]

Indeed the counterpart of the incentive of a low bride-price in 'class endogamous' marriages is the 'deterrent' of an exceptionally high bride-price demanded in the case of marriages between the classes, i.e. between men of the *tálaka* class and girls or women of the nobility. Such cases are accordingly rare. Yet we may note that if a chance of such marriage exists, if the girl loved the man sufficiently to overlook the difference in social status, the high bride-price alone proves no obstacle. For friends and relations would join forces to find the money and to enable the ambitious suitor to make his luck by this advantageous marriage. The benefits of his new position would be considered sufficient promise of an eventual ample gratification. One of my Bida servants was an example: the son of a commoner, he had succeeded in winning the love of the daughter of a very high *saraki* and eventually, after considerable difficulties, in marrying her with money borrowed from friends and relations.

The endogamous marriage rules only ensure that the women of the ruling classes should marry within the class; they do not attempt to exclude the less dangerous form of dilution implied in the marriages of the men to women from other classes and strata. Indeed, the polygamous nature of marriage in Nupe, which forces the men to seek wives

[1] One of my informants who belonged to the *saraki* class even went so far as to explain the whole principle of having a different bride-price for 'family' and 'outside' marriages as a political measure taken by the *saraki* and Fulani nobility with the purpose of preventing commoners from marrying into their class. Though incorrect as regards the facts, this interpretation is significant as an expression of the dominant class sentiments.

1: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1942
FF52 Nupe FF52

from outside their social group, precludes an application of 'class endogamy' in this sense. Marriage of this kind between the strata has reached enormous dimensions. And this shows, incidentally, that the rule of 'class endogamy' serves, even in the case of the Fulani rulers, the interest only of a social identity and solidarity and not, as one might perhaps assume, of racial purity.

POLYGAMY AND SEX MORALITY

In Nupe as in most polygamous societies in which marriage is by bride-price (and by high bride-price at that) the number of wives a man possesses becomes an infallible index of wealth and status. In the peasant districts, where we find comparatively little inequality of wealth, the range of polygamy also varies in narrow limits. Genealogies which I collected in the two Nupe villages Doko and Kutigi show the following range of polygamy (the figures refer to middle-aged or old men, both of the living and previous generation):

	Number of wives						
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Over 5*	*Total*
Number of cases	68	96	20	11	1	1	179

The average is thus 2.1 wives per man.[1] To quote a similar average for Bida would be meaningless: the great inequality of wealth and status is reflected in the widely varying range of polygamy. In the houses of the *talakaži*, the 'poor ones', monogamy is the rule; in the 'middle class' the conditions are much the same as in the peasant districts; but as regards the men of substance and rank, though it would be correct to say that they have rarely less than four wives, the upper limits of their polygamy are very fluid, and cannot even be ascertained with any accuracy. Popular notions attribute to certain royal princes and, above all, to the kings of Nupe, numbers of wives varying between 100 and 200. Even the late *Etsu* Saidu is reported to have had sixty wives. Discretion forbade any direct inquiries. Besides, the vagueness in the legal definition of 'wife' and 'marriage' in these cases would have detracted from the value of the information. According to Mohammedan law a man may have four wives only. But this rule is easily circumvented by limiting the number of legal wives whom one marries with religious rites to four (or four at a time), and relegating the rest to the position of mere concubines. In the houses of the higher as well as of lesser nobility I found

[1] The range of polygamy varies to some extent locally. In Mokwa, for example, I obtained the following figures:

	Number of wives						
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Over 5*	*Total*
Number of cases	44	28	3	3	..	..	60

The average is, again, 2 wives per man.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

with which indigenous sacred knowledge was never concerned are now tacitly assumed to be within the ken of mallams. Whenever you ask the 'man in the street' about the origin of the world, about the sun, moon, and stars, or about the rules of the calendar, he will refer you to the mallams—'these are things the mallams know'. More often than not, this trust is sadly misplaced. But as the Nupe lack of interest in mythology admits of one exception, namely, myths or legends about the genesis of Nupe kingdom, so the growth of the Moslem Emirate has become the theme of numerous stories and quasi-mythical traditions.[1] To be sure, they are not Moslem traditions in the strict sense of the word; but they are traditions about the crucial events of Islam as seen through Nupe eyes. In this sense they add to the religious supports which the Fulani Emirate has come to command, much as the pagan kingdom drew some of its strength from the cycle of myths devoted to Tsoede and his miraculous deeds. And in this sense, too, they may be said to 'fill lacunae', that is, to replace a mythology outdated by events.

Among the other features of the Moslem 'way of life' several fit remarkably (and fortuitously) into the pattern of Nupe culture. This is true, for example, of the attitude to representative art, which is absent in Nupe and discouraged by Islam; of certain general rules of marriage, such as the payment of a 'brideprice', the ease of divorce, and the preference for marriage within the kindred;[2] of the custom of circumcision and one of the dietary rules of Islam, the prohibition of eating pig.[3] The ease with which Moslem kinship rites or the Islamic method of divination found a niche in Nupe life has already been discussed.

There are a few exceptions, however. The Nupe preference for *yawó dengi*, marriage within the kindred, refers only to cross-cousin marriage and excludes the marriage of parallel cousins, which Islamic practice permits and recommends; similarly the sororate, common in Moslem countries, is forbidden by traditional Nupe custom; conversely, the Nupe preferential marriage, between a young man and his mother's brother's widow, is unknown to

[1] Some of these have been quoted in *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 78–9.

[2] The Nupe 'brideprice'—*ewó yawó* ('money of marriage')—corresponds to the 'dower' (*Mahr* or *sadaq*) of Islamic law. The ready acceptance of their equivalence is seen in the linguistic usage, the Arabic word *sadeiki* having become almost a synonym for *ewó yawó*.

[3] Strictly speaking, traditional Nupe culture does not taboo the eating of pigs; but there exists a general idiosyncrasy of this kind, and the Nupe do not keep pigs (unlike their Yoruba neighbours). Another dietary rule of Islam, the prohibition of intoxicants, clashes with the great liking of the Nupe for sorghum beer and with the prominent part this drink plays in all sacrifices. The Nupe Moslem have, in fact, abandoned beer for palmwine, which many consider to be exempt from the Qoranic prohibition.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

794 582 Islam. In all these cases the result has been an odd compromise. In Bida, the Moslem type of marriage is now more frequent than the traditional type; while among the Mohammedans outside the former is absent and the latter still fully in force. The observance of the levirate is somewhat puzzling. Islam permits the marriage with a brother's widow whether the brother is senior or junior to the deceased; in pagan Nupe, marriage with an elder brother's widow is forbidden, but marriage with a younger brother's widow greatly encouraged. Now, in the villages these rules still obtain; in Bida, however, the first kind of marriage is practised, though not very frequently, while the second never occurs. It seems, then, that in the type of marriage which Islam permits but the indigenous custom disallows, the hold of the latter is still sufficiently strong to prevent any widespread adoption of the novel practice; while the type of marriage both permitted by Islam and strongly pressed by local custom has been abandoned by the more 'orthodox' Moslems. This instance contradicts our previous argument as to the fortuitous fit and hence ready acceptance of certain Moslem customs. Rather, we must admit that such a given fit may, paradoxically, entail the rejection of the custom in question. Has it been rejected so as to prevent any blurring of the division between Moslems and non-Moslems, and thus to emphasize the new, different 'way of life'? It would seem to be so; but since this is the only instance of the kind I can only suggest the possibility. The strong hold of the indigenous practice is finally shown in a type of marriage as definitely forbidden by Islam as it is encouraged by Nupe custom, namely, the nominal marriage of a boy with his paternal grandfather's widow. This *yawó suna* ('marriage in name') is practised both in Mohammedan Bida and in the pagan districts. It is clearly bound up with the idea of reincarnation and with the corresponding practice of naming a grandson after his father's father: identical in name and 'soul', the grandson also assumes the nominal status of his *alter ego*. And as the traditional belief remained unassailed by Moslem doctrine, so the practice rooted in it withstood the impact of the new usages.

794 428 The most serious divergence between indigenous custom and Moslem ideas occurs in inheritance. The Moslem law of inheritance implies, briefly, the division of a man's property among all his offspring (both male and female) as well as his wives, their respective shares varying in amount.[1] Nupe custom, on the other hand,

[1] The inheritance of women's property can be disregarded. Women in Nupe own only personal belongings and money, and can dispose of them more or less as they like—to sons, daughters, or their husband. Though the Nupe practice is more fluid than the Mohammedan usage, the two do not clash; nor has the former changed under Moslem influence.

3: Forde E-4 (no date) 1955 FF52 Nupe FF52

MARRIAGE

582 Marriage among the aristocracy is largely endogamous, i.e., within the ruling
565 class, this " family marriage " as the Nupe call it being characterized by a much lower marriage payment than exogamous marriage. Parallel and cross-cousin marriages are encouraged by Moslem custom, though the former is contrary to the traditional marriage rules, so that the scope of " family marriage " is considerably widened. The practice of polygyny, and the fact that the number of wives indicates wealth and status, leads men of wealth and position to marry outside their social group. In order to keep within the Moslem law of four wives only, further wives are relegated to the position of concubines. Ageing wives of the nobility are divorced and replaced by younger girls.[5]

584 According to Temple,[6] betrothal may be as early as 5–7 years for a girl and 10–12 for a boy, but this is not usual. The marriageable age for girls is usually 16–17, but may be as late as 20. Some of the wealthy Bida families marry off their sons very young to enhance their own prestige.[7]

583 Provision of the marriage payment (*ewó yawó*, " money of marriage ") devolves on the head of the family section which is united in the labour unit (*efakó*).[8] It is made up of a series of payments of varying amounts, each of which has a special name. These are: " greeting," " small thanks," " great thanks," " money for henna," and " money for pots," as well as gifts to the bridesmaids and small annual presents of food to the girl's parents. The payments are usually spread over a period of three to five years. They are now valued as a total sum in money which has fluctuated considerably. In pre-British times it was about £3, but later rose to as high as £20, until, in 1934, the Administration intervened and fixed the upper limit at £7. It is becoming customary for the family head to provide the marriage payment only for the eldest son, younger sons having to contribute part of their own, or even bear the whole cost. It is usual for the bride's father to provide her with a dowry, generally consisting of gifts in kind.[9]

[184] Among the Dibo sub-tribe, according to Temple,[10] girls may be betrothed before birth. The marriage payment is high, but may be paid in farm work. The suitor may, however, be outbid by another and his presents returned before the consummation of the marriage.

588 A form of " woman marriage," similar to that practised by the Yoruba of Kabba Province, is recorded by Temple for the Nupe of Gurara District (Lapai Emirate). Here a rich woman goes through a form of marriage with a girl and allows men to have access to her. Any children born belong to the female " husband."[11]

585 The wedding ceremonial occupies a period of 12 days, divided into three phases of four days each. It begins when the bride, assisted by her young female companions, puts on her dress and veil and receives visitors in her house, the climax being reached on the fourth day when professional musicians and drummers are hired and the bride's father offers food and drink to the guests. Among these will be two envoys of the bridegroom, who will be present at a sacrifice offered by the bride's father to ensure a prosperous marriage blessed with children. Among Moslems a mallam makes a public announcement of the marriage at this stage, which legally establishes the bond. In pagan families, however, the bride is taken to her new home by the bridegroom's envoys, where she is received by her parents-in-law and taken to her newly painted sleeping-hut. The next morning the bridegroom's father performs a sacrifice at which the bride's mother's brother is present,

[5] Nadel, 1942, p. 150.
[6] Temple, 1919, p. 322.
[7] Nadel knew of two such cases where the husbands were still pupils at the Government school.
[8] See above, p. 26.
[9] Nadel, 1942, p. 51.
[10] Temple, 1919, p. 114.
[11] Ibid., p. 324.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922

FF52 Nupe FF52

dialectical differences. Many words are identical; they have a similar custom of splitting the verb, and the main difference is that where the Gbari form the negative by the terminal letter R, the Nupe form it by M. It was at Nupiko where the Kaduna flows into the Niger, that Edegi first consolidated the clans under one Chief and founded the Nupe Kingdom (*vide* History of the Niger Province). It was from that region Rabba, that those Nupe came who now inhabit the upper reaches of the Niger in Kontagora and Borgu to Yelwa and beyond into Sokoto Province, where their tribal marks consist of two deep scars on either side of the nose. From this northerly point they follow the river down through Ilorin Province and Kabba, though her Egga is the only place where they are of pure race, as elsewhere they have intermarried freely with neighbouring tribes. These Egga Nupe migrated there from Bida. There are also settlements of Nupe right up the Benue as far as the Ribado Division of Yola, for they are a great trading people and take advantage of the markets on the waterways. There are 1,047 in Nassarawa Emirate; elsewhere they have not been censussed.

The distinctive tribal mark is a curved line from the bridge of the nose to the corner of the mouth, on the right-hand side of the face.

The Nupe population of Agaie number 24,335, and of Lapai 5,061.

The size of the clan may very roughly be assessed at over 100,000 in the Niger Province.

The Emir was chosen from one of the three royal families, Osuman Zaki, Masaba, and Umaru Majigi, all descendants of the Filane founder of the dynasty Mallam Danyo, each of the three families in succession having the right to rule the clan. The Elders would meet together and discuss who was likely to make the best Chief, and having chosen would consult the Mallamai as to the propriety of their selection. As some amongst the Mallamai claimed the gift of foreknowledge, their advice was almost invariably followed. Delay was avoided as far as possible, because in the interval between the death of the Nupe King and the appointment of his successor (which might not be till after the burial), no law could be enforced. If any crime were committed during that period the perpetrator was safe from subsequent punishment, and any prisoner who escaped might not be recaptured.

Thus on the occasion of the death of Muhammadu in 1916, which occurred at nine in the evening, his wife performed the last rites before his death was known outside the compound, and he was buried at 3 a.m. in his house, the public not being acquainted of the fact till later in the day.

4: Temple G-4 (no date) 1922

FF52 Nupe FF52

an outfit for their daughter, pots and pans, mats, etc. A rich man gives something under £4, and spends perhaps as much as £9 or £10 on cloths. If he is unable to raise all this money at once an arrangement can be made in the Alkali's Court, by which he is bound over to make up the deficit within a given time, and so long always as he gives his wife 1,250 cowries, value 6d., for her first chop money, they may marry at once.

The dowry is sometimes remitted in cases where the father-in-law can afford to support the young couple, or a man may marry his first cousin without payment. Where no dower is given the marriage is known as "salaka."

Girls do not marry as a rule before they are sixteen or seventeen and often not till they are twenty, men when they are eighteen or twenty, or later, according to their wealth. The customs of the aboriginal pagan Nupe* differ slightly. The betrothal being arranged by the heads of the respective families, and when it is agreed upon, the boy's guardian assembles the whole family and names the bride in their presence and in that of the prospective groom. All presents are given through the guardian, whom the suitor accompanies on his visits to the bride's people, but he does not see the bride herself. A week before the marriage is consummated both parties remain in their houses, the groom to receive the salutations of his friends, the bride to stain her hands and feet with henna, and to powder her face and body with camwood. On the wedding day the suitor's friends escort him to the hut of his betrothed, where they talk, but she sits silent until the groom gives her presents, which is a signal for the departure of his friends. When the groom emerges he proclaims whether or not he has found his bride chaste. A feast follows, and the groom is escorted back to his house by his friends, where he is followed later by his bride, who is attended by women carrying her outfit. The couple live together in one hut until she conceives, when her husband builds himself another house.

The wedding festivities for a virgin are carried on for a week, day and night. For the first three days they take place in her own people's house, and on the fourth day she goes to her husband's house, where the feasting continues for another four days and four nights. Seven days of seclusion follow, when neither man nor wife may be seen, and after this he is allowed the full honours of a husband. The bride, however, may not go out till three months have elapsed.

The ceremony is of a very much humbler description for a second marriage.

In the Gurara District of Nupe (Lapai Emirate), a curious custom exists, which, with minor modifications is practised

* Sapke and Mokwa. The differences only have been mentioned, not the similarities.

5: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1947
FF52 Nupe FF52
Kede

examination of the political organization has revealed one such machinery: the machinery of coercion. We must ask now how far other, non-political, forms of integration lend their support, or possibly are made to lend it, to political unification. We can distinguish three types of such supporting integrative agencies: (1) integration through actual co-operation between the sections of the population; (2) integration in the spiritual sphere—in other words, through ideologies teaching or preaching unity; (3) integration based on both. Instances of the first type are economic co-operation and community life, of the second, tradition and mythology, and of the third, religious practice.

VIII. Integrative Mechanisms

Economic Co-operation and Community Life. The propinquity of the Kede and *kintsoʒi* settlements, combined with the difference in their productive system, invites a certain measure of co-operation in the economic field. The Kede buy farm-produce from their peasant neighbours, who, in turn, use to some extent Kede transport to dispose of their surplus on the large river markets. This co-operation is by no means exclusive and does not lead to complete dependence upon each other. The peasants also sell some of their farm-produce inland or take their fish directly, on their own canoes, to riverside markets; similarly the Kede buy a certain amount of their food on the various outside markets which they visit on their river voyages.

In their community life, the two groups hardly achieve a more intensive, or less casual, co-operation. The difference in occupation and in the main interests of their lives is not balanced by any other strong ties. The young folk of the Kede and *kintsoʒi* frequently join in each other's dances; here and there friendships are struck between individuals from the two groups. But apart from these contacts the two sections keep to themselves. The age-grade associations do not stretch across the tribal boundary and, above all, there is almost no inter-marriage: the *kintsoʒi* arrange their marriages with their tribal relations inland, and the Kede marry among themselves.[1] In these marriages between Kede villages distance plays no part, which is rather significant, for the (inland) Nupe generally dislike marriages between distant places.

[1] This is true of all the older Kede settlements; in the more recent settlements (e.g. Katcha) I found a few cases of inter-marriage with the *kintsoʒi*.